

Chyla Hunter
JrCOSTEP – Summer 2005
East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
Tucson Area Office IHS

Photo: Ensign Chyla Hunter, LCDR Quannah Nail, and “Lucky Dog #1” ready for a rabies shot during rabies vaccination clinics.



My Environmental Health (EH) summer internship was located at the Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Services in Tucson, Arizona. My preceptor, CDR Don Williams is the Tucson Area Injury Prevention Specialist who also conducts traditional Environmental Health activities. We provided EH services to two tribes residing in the area, the Tohono O’odham (Desert People) Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

My projects consisted of: maintaining a severe injury surveillance system for the two tribes, working with STOP (Securing Tohono O’odham People), a CDC funded project on Effective Strategies to Prevent Motor Vehicle Injuries; assisting with teaching food handling / blood borne pathogen classes and inspecting food establishments on the reservations (casino restaurants, Head Starts, After School Programs, etc.); collecting EH newspaper / magazine articles for a joint IHS/CDC project to market EH to prospective students; working with Environmental Health Officers and veterinarians to service tribal districts with rabies vaccination clinics for pets; sampling homes for lead; inspecting swimming pools. It was also wonderful to celebrate Indian Health Services’ 50th Anniversary and attend the Tucson Area Director’s awards ceremony.

Of the many projects, my favorite was working with the STOP project. We had monthly meetings where I recorded the agenda and analyzed seat belt survey data to present at every meeting. For more than 15 years there were attempts made to pass a seat belt ordinance. On August 2, 2005 the TON Tribal Council voted unanimously to make seat belt use a primary law. I recorded PSA’s (providing information for tribal members to attain free car seats / booster seats and seat belt extenders) at 91.9 FM KOHN, Tohono O’odham radio station and assisted in ordering incentives to be given to tribal members (by Tohono O’odham Police) that are caught wearing their seat belts and at other tribal events. We also received a \$60,000 grant from Health Promotion / Disease Prevention to purchase speed display trailers that collect traffic volume vehicle speed for the reservation (with solar capability) and buy more child car seats / booster seats and bike helmets.



**Photo: CDR Don Williams with
Ensigns Chyla and Laura
Hunter inspecting a food
establishment.**

My summer with the Tucson Area Indian Health Service was made more rewarding with the friendships that I made (4 JrCOSTEP's, 1 ROTC intern, 1 Sells physician, 1 engineer from San Xavier, and 1 chemical engineer from FDA in Nogales). My fellow EH JrCOSTEP, Laura Hunter (my sister from

another mother) shared in numerous wonderful experiences. We traveled to Kitt Peak Observatory on the TON, Tombstone, Kartchner Caverns, Mexico, Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, etc. I don't think my experience would have been the same without them, as every moment was educational and fun.